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ABSTRACT

Summaries are provided of three colloquiums conducted at Skagit Valley College in February, March, and May 1974. A paper on "The Role of Philosophy at a Community College," by Valeria A. Simmons is also included. The colloquiums addressed the following topics: Coping with Certain Transfer Problems of Philosophy Majors from Public Community Colleges to Senior Catholic Institutions; Philosophy, Women, and Community Colleges; and Philosophically Trained Public Administrators. In the first colloquium, the problems discussed concerned students who aspire to clerical or ordinal vocations, and who begin their education in public community colleges and subsequently transfer to Catholic senior institutions. The second colloqium addressed the scope and role of philosophy in our society and the difficulties but importance of women being involved in philosophy. The use of philosophic techniques in the conduct of public affairs was the concern of the third colloqium. (DB)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIA

WINTER/SPRING 1974

COUNCIL FOR PHILOSOPHIC STUDIES

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT
SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE
MOUNT VERNON, WASHINGTON

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COPING WITH CERTAIN TRANSFER PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY MAJORS FROM PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO SENIOR CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS

Summary of a colloquium conducted at Mt. Vernon, Washington, February 9, 1974.

Participants--

John D. Connell, MA, Skagit Valley College
Walter A. Coole, MA, Skagit Valley College
Paul A. Magnano, MA, Whatcom Community College
George J. Seidel, Ph. D., St. Martin's College

Sponsor--
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This paper reports conclusions arrived at by the colloquium's participants. The problems addressed concern students who aspire to clerical or ordinal vocations; and who begin their education in public community colleges to subsequently transfer to Catholic senior institutions.

The opinions expressed herin represent the private views of the participants in consension and not necessarily the official positions of the sponsors or the participants' institutions.

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT
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The role of the public community college is expanding and broadening with considerable momentum to meet the needs of their local communities. The scope of the community college curriculum must encompass academic, occupational and continuing education. In light of its expansion and added breadth, it is imparative for the community college to continually evaluate its curriculum and methods in order to meet the present and anticipate future needs.

In compliance with our challenge, the Skagit Valley College philosophy department addressed one aspect of the multifacited problem at their 1974 winter philosophy colloquium. The topic discussed was "Transfer Problems of Philosophy Majors, from Public Community Colleges to Senior Catholic Institutions". The Skagit Valley College philosophy colloquium sought to identify specific needs of philosophy students transferring to senior catholic schools and then made several recommendations towards meeting those needs.

Impelling Factors. This aspect, of the total community college effort is important for several reasons. The Washington Community College System's enabling act and Community College District #4's educational policy appear to direct its instructors to assist students in their chosen vocational efforts. Society stands to gain substantially from philosophically educated persons and clergy. Thus, it is clearly within the scope of our professional responsibilities to assist students seeking advanced education in senior catholic institutions in their efforts.

Another justification for addressing the needs of students transferring to a senior catholic institution is that the solutions may vary well be applicable to students pursuing other occupations as well as continuing education students with a Judaic/Christian

heritage. According to the educational policy of Washington State Community College District #4, an instructor's professional responsibility includes assisting the student in understanding his cultural heritage.

Limiting Factors. In addressing the role of public education as preparation for private and religious accupational efforts, one must consider at least two concerns: legal difficulties and public criticism. The colloquium viewed as foundational to all legal restraints operative in this situation, the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment as consistently interpreted. It was felt that the conclusions presented in this paper avoid all such legal difficulties and will be viewed by the public as responsible and of community value.

Recommended Curriculum. Apart from an Introdvction to Philosophy course, the colloquium recommended the following curriculum as necessary for any philosophy or divinity student entering as a junior at a senior catholic institution.

*Contemporary Continental Philosophy

Existentialism: Marcel, Teilhard de Chardin, Jaspers, Sartre

Phenomenology: Husserl, Heideggar, M. Merleau-Ponty

*Ethics

Should include the causuistic view

*History of Philosophy: Medieval/Modern

Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume

*Logic

Informal Logic

Formal Logic

*Metaphysics

Mind/Body Problem

*Metaphysics continued
Freedom/Deterministic Problem
Time/Space
God

*Philosophy of Religion
Alternative concepts of God
Alternative epistemological schemes
Traditional problems and their solutions
Religion and science

Efficiency Problems. A fundamental obstacle for implementing the curricular recommendations is the cost, both financially and in terms of time and space. Though the suggested curriculum will be of interest to students other than those transferring to senior catholic institutions, nevertheless, certain courses will have very low enrollment. Using traditional padagogical methods, the cost of some of the cirriculum viewed as "necessary preparation" would be prohibitive.

For the past five years, Skagit Valley College Philosophy Department, under the direction of Walter Coole has been engaged in an "open classroom" delivery method combined with "mastery learning" techniques. The independence of both the student and the instructor attained through open classroom methods allows for theoretically unlimited course offerings. Within the state of Washington's community college system, Skagit Valley College's open classroom is one of the most economically efficient in terms of dollars, student-teacher ratio, etc. The efficiency problem appears to be surmountable by administrating the learning process by alternative methods: viz, those admitting to individualized study, based on prepared modules of learning activity.

PHILOSOPHY, WOMEN, AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Summary of a colloquium conducted at Mt. Vernon, Washington, March 22 & 23, 1974.

Participants -

Faculty

Susan Barnhart, Counseling Office, Skagit Valley College
John D. Connell, Philosophy Department, Skagit Valley College
Walter A. Coole, Philosophy Department, Skagit Valley College
Katherine Filipovitch, Philosophy Department, Portland Community College
Valerie Simmons, Philosophy Department, Portland Community College

Adjunct Faculty

John Larson, Philosophy Department, Skagit Valley College
Hemlata N. Vasavada, Philosophy Department, Skagit Valley College

Students

Roberta Deaver, Skagit Valley College
Marna Fletcher, Burlington-Edison High School
Jean Larson, Mt. Vernon High School

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This paper reports conclusions arrived at by the colloquium's participants. The problems addressed concern the scope and role of philosophy in our society and the difficulties but importance of women being involved in philosophy.

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PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT
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Mount Vernon, Wash. 98273

Believing in the importance of philosophy in the shaping of society but recognizing that philosophy plays either a small or non-existent role in community colleges, the Spring philosophy colloquium at Skagit Valley College addressed itself to what the function of philosophy ought to be.

Valerie Simmons (Portland Community College) read a paper entitled "The Role of Philosophy at a Community College" in which she proposed that by defining culture as "the interaction of individuals with each other and with the perceived environment", it follows that the basic function of the interaction is the establishment of agreements about and with the perceived environment, and that the agreements of a given culture at a given time are its reality. This being the case, the importance of philosophy as a conceptual interpreter, critic and composer of reality ought to be recognized as an essential component of culture.

Philosophy can and ought to function in a descriptive manner, sorting out what is being perceived by the members of a given culture and what agreements are emphasized within that culture. By functioning in this way, philosophy would provide a basic understanding of what is now agreed upon within the culture. By recognizing what the agreements within the culture are, the participant is in a position to evaluate his culture and his involvement within it.

The colloquium also concluded that philosophy can and ought to function in a critical manner by pointing out the discrepancies in the agreed reality. The categories of logic and axiology provide an essential critique, both internally and externally, to the cultural model.

A third function of philosophy is in the proposing of alternative models of agreement. By creating alternative models, philosophy provides individuals within the culture potentially more adequate descriptions or definitions of his perceived reality.

The colloquium called for a restructuring of philosophical curriculums to incorporate the above mentioned functions of philosophy. Believing "students with this preparation have a greater ability to orient themselves in our culture by seeing more clearly where they are, what problems are present and what alternatives or goals they could pursue. With greater ability to orient oneself comes greater self-determinism; a responsible freedom".

Women and Philosophy. The role of women in our society is in radical transition. Historical values of dependence, submission and dosility are being replaced with independence, leadership, and aggression. Women are increasingly becoming aware of various agreements concerning women in our culture and making individual determinations of their value. Thus, it has become imparative for women to involve themselves in the activity of philosophy. If the function of philosophy is the conceptual interpreting, criticizing and composing or agreed reality, then it is a necessary tool for any individual or group involved in the task of discovery and defining who she or they are.

The activity of philosophy is especially valuable to women as a group involved in determing what the present agreements between women and our cultural institutions are and in determing which ought to be reinforced and which ought to be renegotiated. Philosophy provides the tools and methods for dealing with these questions of our lived world.

However, one of the agreements of institutional philosophy has historically been that women's place was not in the hollowed sanctutaries of philosophy faculties and their students. Though this bigotry still plights many philosophy department, the traditional agreements are being renegotiated. But even as an equal opportunity employer, academic philosophy has few openings and many aspirants.

Occupational Alternatives for Philosophy Majors. In keeping with this broader view of philosophy, the colloquium addressed occupational alternatives open to philosophy majors. It was noted that though there is a highly significant value in a philosophical education, there is an over abundance of philosophy teachers at present. It therefore behoves those interested in promoting philosophical concerns to explore and describe the occupational value of such study. The colloquium offered the following list as merely a sample of the diversity of alternatives.

1. Computer Programing
2. Public Administration
3. Pre-law, medicine, anthropology, psychology, sociology
4. High School philosophy instructor

Philosophy and the Community College. If philosophy is going to function as a conceptual interpreter, critic and composer of agreed reality, and if philosophy is going to play the significant role it must; in discovery and defining who women are and will be in our society; and if philosophy majors are going to be adequately prepared for non-traditional occupational alternatives, then the community college philosophy curriculum and classroom method must adjust to meet the new needs. Traditional agreements between student and instructor must be renegotiated to allow more freedom and independence on the part of both.

The emerging solution appears to be an open classroom teaching technique with its programmed texts, recorded lectures and flexible hours. This combined with mastery learning techniques offers highly individualized programs to meet student needs and an economically sound budget. Skagit Valley College's philosophy department under the direction of Walter Coole has experimented with such a philosophy program for the past five years with measurable results.

The Role of Philosophy at a Community College

By Valerie A. Simmons

Portland Community College
Philosophy Department

Philosophy can and should have an important role in community colleges. The fact that philosophy departments are either small or non-existent at community colleges leads me to believe that the function of philosophy in culture and how it can prepare students to live in our culture is not fully understood. In this paper I will clarify these two points with the purpose of understanding the role philosophy should have in community colleges.

Simply defined, culture is the interaction of individuals with each other and with the perceived environment. The basic function of that interaction is the establishment of agreements about and with the perceived environment and would include both the effects created upon that perceived environment and the specific interaction used to hold agreements in place once made. Within any given culture, then, reality is the set of agreements made by individuals about and with the perceived environment.

Since philosophy fundamentally attempts to conceptually understand, criticize and/or improve reality, it is the essential component of culture. Within any given culture philosophy has some structural interrelationship with that culture. My main concern here is the <u>function</u> rather than structure of philosophy.

Philosophy functions as a conceptual structure of interlocking definitions (potential agreements) which allows the alignment of existing data (perceptions of the environment) and possibly the alignment of future data. These definitions I call potential agreements in that they can become agreed upon in the culture if their interlocking structure does in fact align other's perceptions of the environment. Therefore, philosophy can conceptually understand, criticize and/or improve culture to the extent that it aligns other's perceptions of the environment.

In a culture which has little basic agreement about perceptions of the environment, a philosophical structure can function to sort out what is being perceived by the members of that culture and thus can aid their understanding of what is occurring so they can agree on what they are doing.

In a culture whose agreements are not working (by their own criteria) philosophy can point out the discrepencies in the agreements. In a culture that is aware of why its agreements are not working, philosophy can offer an alternative set of definitions that the members of the culture might agree upon if the definitions align the member's perceptions of the perceived environment better (by their own criteria) than the definitions currently agreed upon.

Our culture can be considered to fit in all three of these categories in the sense that most people view it from one of these three perspectives depending upon their understanding of or relationship to institutionalized

agreements. Philosophy can, therefore, help prepare students to live in our culture by:

1. providing a basic understanding of what is now agreed upon;

2. pointing out discrepencies in current agreements;

3. offering alternative structural definitions which students can potentially choose to agree with;

4. encouraging by example and practice student's creating their own alternatives where other's creations fail.

Students with this preparation have a greater ability to orient themselves in our culture by seeing more clearly where they are and what problems are present and by understanding what alternatives or goals they could persue. With greater ability to orient oneself comes greater self-determinism, a responsible freedom. This philosophical preparation could counter-act the alienation, meaninglessness, powerlessness, and apathy that members of our culture currently experience and, thereby, begin the process of creating a revised reality through individuals agreeing with definitions that do align their perceptions of the environment.

Community colleges have an "ideal" position in our culture for effecting this fundamental orientation process. This is not to say that universities cannot be responsible for their share, but community colleges attract a broad cross-cut of our population, most of whom do not go to universities.

In order to bring about this orientation, philosophy instructors must be able to communicate the structural definitions necessary to fulfill these functions of philosophy at the level of understanding of the students--of course, with an eye to raising their understanding. The point is to begin with what is real to the student or you've lost him. From his reality you can build, but you need his agreement before you start. You have to show him that what you have to say can help him align data in his world.

"But," you say, "philosophy is a college transfer course. We can't water it down...." Okay, I'm not saying that. I am saying we must communicate and that requires a point of agreement or students will not benefit from the functions of philosophy.

I am also saying that philosophy should not only be a college transfer course. More of our students are training for vocations or don't know what they're studying for. The orientational function of philosophy is just as important for these students. Not understanding its function, we've locked philosophy in the academy when it's needed in the auto shops, police departments, hospitals, stores, radio studios, homes of our students. Here we do not have to consider university "Standards" but can teach what students need to understand and align data in <u>their</u> lives. So we leave out Kant maybe even books altogether in some cases, and we reeducate ourselves to the real problems of people in our culture. We have the tools if we will use them, and if we don't, no one else will because philosophy is the only discipline with a sufficiently broad range of understanding and unique function to undertake the project.

In our community colleges, then, the role of philosophy is providing a basis from which students can orient their lives in our culture. The more philosophy is expanded in terms of more courses for more students the better it can perform its role.

PHILOSOPHICALLY TRAINED PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS

Summary of a colloquium at Mt. Vernon, Washington, 24-25 May 1974.

Participants--

John D. Connell, Philosophy Department, Skagit Valley College
Walter A. Coole, Philosophy Department, Skagit Valley College
Roger Bassett, Assistant Director, Washington State Board for Community College Education
Robert D. Peck, Assistant Director, Oregon State Educational Coordinating Council

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This paper reports conclusions arrived at by the colloquium's participants. The problems addressed concern the use of philosophic techniques in the conduct of public affairs.

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PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT
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During a meeting of Oregon community college philosophy teachers, April 1974, Dr. Peck expressed an interest in the relationship between philosophy and public administration. The topic proved interesting to the Skagit Valley College Philosophy Department who resolved to conduct an in-depth discussion of the relationship specifically to gain direction in a possible course of action.

The colloquim's participants represent both the viewpoint of the professional public administrator and the trained philosopher. Two possible goals were identified:

i. to identify ethics and problem-solving logic as essential to the knowledge and actions of a public administrator

ii. to increase the number of philosophically trained public administrators

Factors in favor:

--current public realization of the consequences of incomplete ethical learning

--increasing formalization of job selection and management (civil service)

--independence of philosophy's logic from specific content

Resisting factors:

--inaccessability of public administration curriculum

--egghead image, ivory tower attitudes of philosophers

--generalized nature of governmental administration

--"effective administrators are born, not made"

Actions:

--identify typical learning tasks for public administrators

--identify elements of a philosophic curriculum which would enhance the training of public administrators

--identify one or more delivery systems for identified content

--prepare materials for student-paced usage

Speculation about the role of community colleges. In contemplating the probable clientele to be served, it appeared that community colleges may again be required to adapt their operations to non-traditional tasks of higher education.

a. Public community colleges are logistically more accessible to the probable clientele.

b. Community colleges' traditional flexibility of curriculum and operational mode could well accept the task of providing post-graduate training to technically-trained public administrators and to philosophic specialists than more traditional institutions.

c. Typical career-patterns of community college philosophy faculties are more adapted to instructional service of the kind needed than are career-patterns of university teachers.

Conclusion. The colloquim's participants are resolved to pursue the action-plan outlined above with the hope that a viable series of programs can be established for use in the Pacific Northwest.

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